2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1
Zanzibar FM1

that any new crew members in Arab ships joined voluntarily; vessels must not be overmanned, and crew and passenger lists must be provided and in order; ships must be surveyed, and kept seaworthy; and *nakhodas* must be certificated. As for the last, the port officials conduct examinations, and the general principle seems to be that if a man is capable enough to bring a dhow down to Zanzibar, certificate or no certificate, he can also be trusted to sail her away again. But the fee for examination is fifteen shillings, and the Arabs complain about it.

We touched at Zanzibar again after loading in the Rufiji, re-embarked our *nakhoda* and took aboard a few Swahili school-teachers as passengers (they proposed to hire an automobile at Kuwait to take them to Mecca), filled the decks with coconuts and cases of soap and vermicelli, and departed toward the Persian Gulf again with the first of the broken weather at the end of the northeast season. We did not await the coming of the true south-west monsoons, for it sets in hard; we sailed direct to Muscat, in twenty-six days.

Muscat was depressed and there was no trade there, not even smuggling. All that changed hands, as far as I could see, was a box of Maria Theresa thalers, enormous Austrian coins minted in London for the Omani and available in Zanzibar at a price less than the exchange rate in Muscat. The Arabs turned everything to profit and were prepared to sell anything, even the ship. The sailors' pastime in the Rufiji was buying lemons — a thousand for a shilling — and converting them into sherbet, which they hawked in the *suq* at Kuwait throughout the summer.

Our cargo of mangrove poles sold at Bahrein, the ship returned to Kuwait, to lay up inside a coral breakwater until the new season's Iraqi dates ripened and it was time to go out again. At Kuwait, when all her people were returned — several relations of the *nakhoda* had dispersed from Zanzibar back to Lamu and Mogadishu to collect debts — a general balance sheet of the whole round voyage was struck, the profits computed carefully, and divided by a system of shares arranged traditionally. It was not a straightforward statement of income and expenditure; I never saw or heard of any piece of Arab seafaring business which was as simple as that. It was all complicated by prior advances,

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

point of vantage. Before every prayer the Arabs first perform the required Moslem ablutions of washing their hands, face, feet, etc., in sea water; then they go through the prayer ritual facing towards Mecca with their headcloth spread in front of them as a prayer rug. It is for determining the direction of Mecca that the compass on a large dhow is often most used! The first prayer is the dawn prayer said in the first greying light of dawn; the morning prayer takes place when the sun is close to the meridian; the afternoon prayer is called when the shadows begin to lengthen; the evening prayer is said shortly after the sun sets; finally, the night prayer ends the day several hours after sunset. The above applies to Moslem Persians and Indians as well as to the Arabs; obviously it does not apply to Hindus or sailors of other religions. 788

Eating is intimately related to Islamic religion for Arabs and other Moslem sailors, as their three meals come directly after the dawn, the morning, and the evening prayers. In the month of Ramadhan all faithful Moslems neither drink nor eat during the daylight hours; however, during Ramadhan all activities on land and on sea usually hit a low ebb. In other months breakfast consists for the Arabs of little more than a piece of unleavened bread with some sweet tea or water with which to wash it down. Lunch has more to offer, consisting of a mess of boiled rice with a flavoring of *ghee* (clarified butter) and curried or baked fish (if the ship has any fish aboard). The main portion of the meal is rice, which is served on a huge tray, or often simply on a palm leaf mat. The crew gathers around several of these trays or mats and makes quick work of the food, using no implements other than their right hand. They take a little fish (or meat if they are that fortunate), ball a small handful of rice around it and toss the ball deftly into their mouth, usually without losing a crumb. Nothing is ever wasted, as someone always scavenges the last morsel. Supper is essentially the same as lunch. 261 262 264 785

Often a feast is in order in port; this always calls for the slaughter of a sheep (or goat), a number of which are always kept alive on board. The sheep is usually slaughtered at dawn and is virtually dragged from its skin into a large iron pot, where it is boiled in water. The sheep or goat is the *pièce de résistance* and is served whole on a huge tray of rice. For a feast, a curry flavoring or raisins are often mixed with the rice. Various delicacies from the sheep, such as the heart, liver, lungs, and kidneys, are cooked separately and served in side dishes. As the feast starts, the sheep is methodically torn apart limb from limb and fiber by fiber. The meat is always eaten in the same manner: rice is balled around small bits of meat and tossed deftly into one's mouth with the right hand. In pulling 527 252 264

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

White radishes	100	5
Lemons	40	5
Other fresh vegetables	400	15
10 live sheep	1100	40
15 live sheep and goats	1500	80
		Total Rs. 1502

It should be noted that rice constitutes one-third of the cost. The other great staple at sea—fish—is not listed accurately, as most of it is caught fresh; probably between two thousand and three thousand pounds of fresh fish was eaten. It should also be noted that no charge occurs for water. The dhow will take a tank of bad water rather than pay for it.

The Arab dhow, regardless of its size, always has a fish-line overboard, and it is not uncommon to see half a dozen lines overboard. I have caught many fish myself trailing a line from a dhow in the Persian Gulf. Villiers[48] states that fishing off the whole African coast is particularly good and that it is not uncommon for the many lines trailed from a Kuwait *bhum* to net twenty to thirty large fish a day. The fish not eaten are cleaned by splitting, are pounded in salt, and then hung in the sun to dry; the sailors never bother to scale the fish.

The galley on an Arab dhow is simply a spot on the deck. The stove consists simply of an open-sided box with some sand and cooking stones on the bottom (see Plate 21—top left). The larger the dhow the larger the fire-box. The cook cooks everything here with wood fires of palm wood, brush, or driftwood.

On dhows of South Arabia and the Gulf of Aden ports there is also a bread oven. I have never seen these on dhows from the Persian Gulf or Gulf of Oman. The oven consists of a wide-mouthed pot perhaps fifteen or eighteen inches in diameter; this pot is put inside a barrel about two and one-half or three feet in diameter and the space around the pot is filled with sand (see Plate 21—top right). The barrel is firmly lashed together and then is usually securely lashed to the deck. To bake bread, the cook builds a fire in the bottom of the pot and allows it to burn down to the coals. Then he takes a flat piece of dough like a large pancake and pastes this on the inside of the pot; the heat in the walls of the pot and the coals bake the bread. This is the Arab *khubuz*, one of the staples of the Arab at sea as well as on land.

VI

It is difficult for one totally unfamiliar with the Arab East to understand the economic system of the Arabs. The tenets of Islam prevent any

[48] A. Villiers, 55, p. 190.